

## **Year 2014 Sees BN Slowly Regaining Support Of The People**

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KUALA LUMPUR (Bernama) -- The year 2014 saw the Barisan Nasional (BN) regaining some lost ground, albeit at a somewhat slow pace.

Nevertheless, if this year's by-election results are a good gauge, there are signs that the coalition is regaining the confidence and support of the electorate.

Having emerged victorious in three of the four by-elections it had participated in, the BN's success has sparked a glimmer of hope that it still has good prospects of continuing to steer the nation.

A total of five by-elections were held this year, involving the state seats of Balingian in Sarawak, Kajang (Selangor) and Pengkalan Kubor (Kelantan) and the Parliamentary seats of Teluk Intan (Perak), and Bukit Gelugor (Penang), which the BN did not contest.

Although Pakatan Rakyat succeeded in retaining the Kajang and Bukit Gelugor seats, its internal strife and politicking, as well as differences among the component party leaders, have in a way eroded public confidence in the opposition coalition.

### **MEANINGFUL VICTORY**

The BN delivered a credible performance at the by-elections, retaining the Balingian and Pengkalan Kubor state seats, and wresting the Teluk Intan Parliamentary seat from the DAP, which had been holding the fort there since 2008.

The BN candidate for Balingian, Yussibnosh Balo, defeated Parti Keadilan Rakyat's (PKR) Abdul Jalil Bujang with a majority of 6,911 votes. Yussibnosh had secured 8,194 votes, against Abdul Jalil's 1,283 votes.

In Pengkalan Kubor, BN's Mat Razi Mat Ail had secured a majority of 2,635 votes, beating Wan Rosdi Wan Ibrahim of PAS, who received 7,326 votes, and Independent candidate Izat Bukhary Ismail Bukhary, who only got 38 votes.

Undisputedly, the Teluk Intan by-election was the most meaningful victory for the BN, which saw a shift in voter support towards the coalition. In the closely fought race, BN candidate Datuk Mah Siew Keong, who is also Gerakan President, defeated DAP's youthful candidate, Dyana Sofya Mohd Daud, with a slim majority of 238 votes. Mah polled 20,157 votes, against Dyana Sofya's 19,919 votes.

### **MOMENT OF RESURRECTION**

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin had described the BN's victory in Teluk

Intan as a crucial sign that the people's confidence in the coalition was beginning to strengthen.

Despite winning with a slim majority, he believed that it served as the moment of resurrection for the coalition, especially Gerakan, and has inspired it to rev up the party machinery to move forward.

Although Gerakan was viewed as an underdog in Teluk Intan, its victory proved that the key to success was unity among the BN coalition parties.

Similarly in the Kajang by-election, although victory eluded BN's Datin Paduka Chew Mei Fun, who is also MCA Vice-President, the coalition succeeded in reducing the opposition's majority.

PKR President Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, who won the Kajang seat, polled 16,741 votes, against Chew's 11,362 votes.

Wan Azizah's majority of 5,379 votes was lower than her predecessor and fellow party member Lee Chin Cheh's majority of 6,824 votes, which he had secured at the 13th general election (GE13) despite having had to face candidates from the BN and Berjasa, as well as three Independents, in the Kajang constituency.

#### BN REGAINING SUPPORT

The by-election, which was orchestrated by the PKR following Lee's sudden resignation as state assemblyman, also saw a spike in Chinese support for the BN to 25 per cent from seven per cent during GE13.

MCA President Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai had heralded the by-election as the return of Chinese support for the BN, and said that it would serve as a stepping stone in the party's mission to transform itself.

The by-election, which can be used as a yardstick to gauge the level of acceptance by the people, has renewed the party's vigour to reinvent itself and remain relevant in the nation's political landscape.

While the MCA and Gerakan are working tirelessly to regain the Chinese community's trust and have even made some inroads, the MIC appears to be embroiled in internal problems. Indeed, party President Datuk Seri G. Palanivel shoulders the unenviable burden of restoring the MIC to its previous glory and ensuring that it remains relevant to the Indian community.

#### HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY

Since Palanivel took over the reins of the party from Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu in 2010, the MIC had not seen any drastic changes or improvements. In fact, it is the internal strife that

had stood out prominently, causing many party leaders and members to voice out their displeasure.

Palanivel has appeared to have taken to maintaining silence whenever he was confronted with community issues or party matters, the latest being the Registrar of Societies' directive to the party to conduct fresh elections to elect its Central Working Committee members and three vice-presidents.

Following the massive mudslide in Bertam Valley in Cameron Highlands in November, Palanivel, who is also the Member of Parliament for Cameron Highlands, was admonished by the Sultan of Pahang, Sultan Ahmad Shah, for not having taken any action to address the environmental problems plaguing his constituency.

This prompted MIC Strategic Director Datuk Seri S. Vell Paari to hit out at his chief, saying that there was an urgent need to rejuvenate and renew the party so that it could remain relevant in the local political landscape.

According to Vell Paari, the 68-year-old party required a dynamic leader who could adequately handle the challenges facing the MIC.

The People's Progressive Party (PPP), meanwhile, has already embarked on efforts to transform the party, choosing to focus on community development activities to garner the support of the Indian community.

Its President Tan Sri M. Kayveas said the transformation programme was vital as the party had to help the BN to regain the support of the Indians, who had swung in favour of the opposition in the political tsunami which swept the nation during the 2008 and 2013 general elections.

#### BN NEEDS TO RE-ENERGISE

In view of the BN's poor performance in GE12 and GE13, its Chairman, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, has urged all the component parties to buck up and re-energise the coalition so that it can rise to future challenges and general elections.

The Prime Minister also warned the parties to brace themselves to face greater challenges in time to come.

To enjoy longevity in politics, BN component parties would have to close ranks, strengthen their respective parties, prevent discord and move forward towards all Malaysians, Najib was quoted as saying when opening Sabah's Liberal Democratic Party's annual congress on Nov 16.

Although the BN is constantly manipulated and vilified in social media, it is continuously making an effort to improve itself in every aspect in a bid to convince the public that only the BN could govern the nation effectively.

During the Umno General Assembly in November, Najib, who is also party President, frequently drew the delegates' attention to the importance of maintaining solidarity, and also stressed that the BN, especially Umno, was ready for transformation.

He said Umno, as BN's main component party, would continue to ensure that solidarity persists because it was the most important asset in ensuring national peace and harmony.

"This is something we will do tirelessly because it is the most important asset for the survival of Umno, the BN and our beloved country," he had said.

Najib had also used the party's general assembly as the platform to announce the government's decision to retain the Sedition Act 1948 and beef it up with additional provisions for the sake of maintaining solidarity, harmony and stability in Malaysia.

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